



*The Public*  
ADVOCATES  
OFFICE

*The Voice of Consumers*  
*Making a Difference*

# Annual Presentation to the Assembly Utilities & Energy Committee

June 16, 2021

Amy Yip-Kikugawa, Acting Director

# Our Mission

Obtain the lowest possible rate for utility services consistent with safety, reliability, and the state's environmental goals.





# What We Do



Staff visit at Cal-Am GRC.



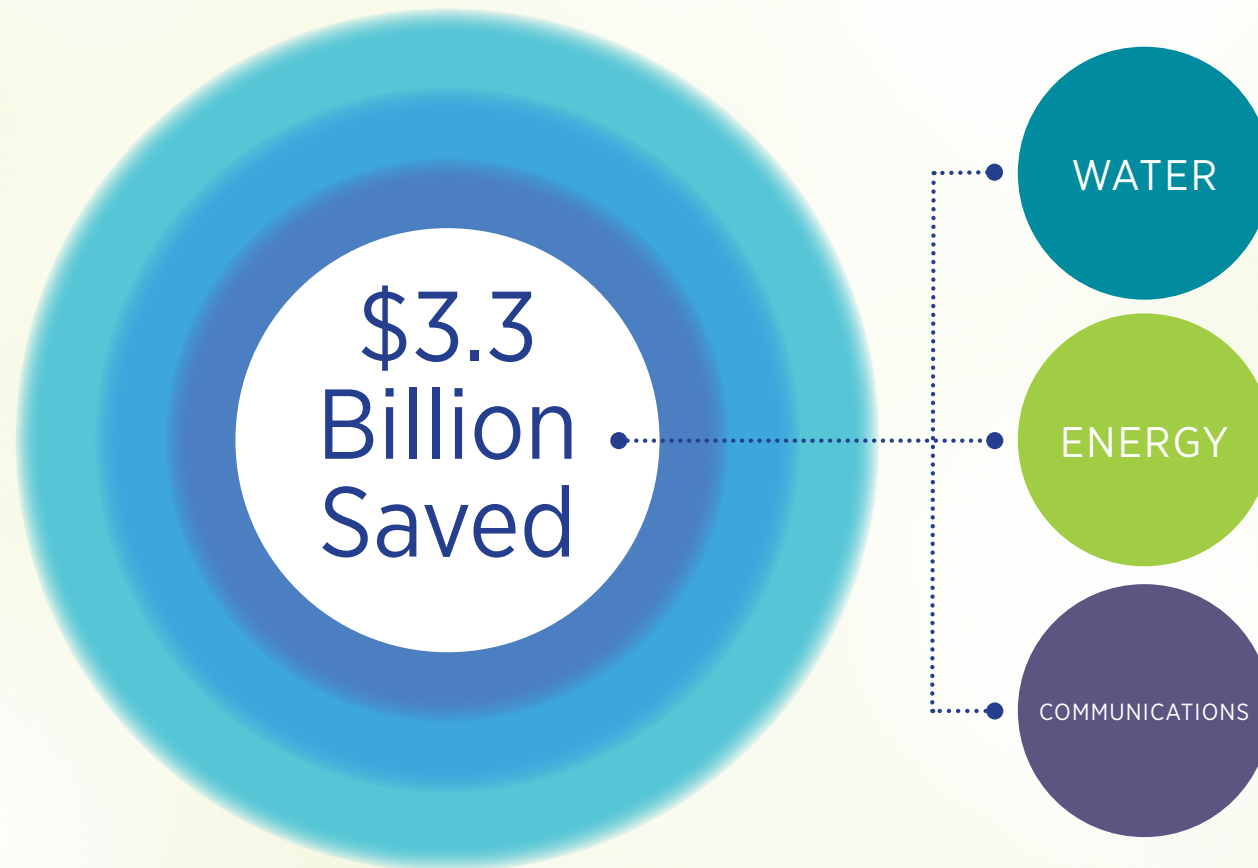
Staff visit at Cal-Am GRC.



Staff visit at Cal-Am GRC.

# The Public Advocates Office 2020 Customer Savings

Total customer savings was over \$3.3 billion through reduced utility revenues and avoided rate increases.





# Policy Efforts

**Achieve the Best Value for Consumers by Ensuring:**

- Access & Affordability
- Safety & Reliability
- Environmental Goals are Met



# Access and Affordability

## **COVID-19 Financial Relief and Protections**

- Advocated accelerating the distribution of the Climate Credit to help electric customers lower their bills.
- Urged debt forgiveness for all energy customers who accumulated arrearages during the pandemic.
- Recommended making Internet hotspots more available, increased funding for take-home devices, and a temporary increase of broadband speeds in order to meet low-income customer needs during the shelter-in-place order.

## **Energy Rate Cases**

- Saved customers over \$1.87 billion across 3 general rate cases: Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E), Liberty Utilities (Liberty), and PacifiCorp.

## **Water Rate Cases**

- Saved customers \$64 million in three general rate case proceedings: San Gabriel Water, Liberty Utilities, and California Water Service.

## **Affordable Utility Services**

- Helped eliminate the Water Revenue Adjustment Mechanism program (which can increase customer bills by 10 to 20 percent).
- Recommended wireline broadband discounts to low-income customers in the Lifeline program and helped establish Internet access as an essential utility service in the state.

# Safety and Reliability

## **Emergency Disaster Relief Program**

- Recommended wireless service providers be required to install at least 72 hours of back-up power (from the start of an electrical outage) to cell towers.

## **Water Quality**

- Recommended replacing aging pipelines to help ensure the continued safety and reliability of service in Liberty Utilities and San Gabriel Water Company districts.
- Helped ensure water standards were met by advocating for water contamination removal.

## **Protocols and Procedures for Electric Utilities' Voluntary Power Shutoffs**

- Recommended additional de-energization guidelines to make processes, including compliance reporting, more transparent and improve power outage maps for customers.
- Urged the CPUC to require PG&E and SCE to explain in a formal investigation why they should not be subject to fines and remedies for their notification failures during the 2019 power shutoffs.

## **Wildfire Mitigation**

- Identified numerous deficiencies and concerns regarding the electric utilities' proposed Wildfire Mitigation Plans, with issues ranging from unrealistic workload estimates to insufficient data to support the plans' objectives.
- Urged the Wildfire Safety Division to require the electric utilities to fix major deficiencies in their Wildfire Mitigation Plans.



## **Equitable Microgrid Development**

- Supported the use of temporary generators to help keep the lights on for communities subject to de-energization.
- Proposed to prioritize microgrid incentives for communities with a high proportion of customers who are reliant on electricity for certain medical needs and other vulnerable customers.

## **SoCalGas Aliso Canyon Storage Facility Investigation**

- Demonstrated that SoCalGas violated its own standards and state requirements, failed to perform weekly surface pressure tests, and did not undertake monthly inspections of the wells promptly.

## **T-Mobile and Sprint Merger**

- Argued that the merger would result in a loss of a viable competitive player in the wireless market, which raises significant risks to service quality and reliability, particularly for low-income customers.

## **Reliable Energy Services**

- In the Integrated Resource Planning proceeding, we advocate for a significant reduction in GHG emissions for the electricity sector, while maintaining an emphasis on safety, reliability, and minimizing impacts on ratepayer bills.

## **Misuse of Energy Efficiency Funds and Wasteful Spending**

- Advocated for the elimination of the utility shareholder incentive program and the Efficiency Savings and Performance Incentive, that cost customers tens of millions of dollars annually.
- Played a critical role in holding SDG&E and SCE accountable for improperly managing energy efficiency programs that are designed to increase the use of efficient light bulbs in homes and businesses.
- Uncovered substantial evidence that SoCalGas has been inappropriately recording expenses for lobbying activities in accounts funded by ratepayers.



# Environmental Goals

## **Transportation Electrification**

- Called for programs that support the installation of electric vehicle charging stations in underserved communities.
- Advocated for cost-effective programs and reducing program costs paid by residential and small business customers.
- Carefully reviewed utility program cost estimates and corrected errors, inconsistencies, and overestimates, which resulted in over \$300 million in cost savings to ratepayers.

## **Interconnection Rules for Distributed Energy Resources**

- Proposed accelerating the operationalization of smart inverters to maximize DER growth using existing distribution grid equipment and ensuring consistent statewide grid access for DERs.

# 2021 Priorities

## **Ensuring Consumer Access to Affordable and Safe Utility Service**

- Helping prevent wildfires by making cost-effective recommendations to strengthen utility wildfire mitigation plans and recommending improvements to safety and transparency.
- Continuing to find innovative and creative solutions to provide monthly bill relief to those families most impacted by COVID.
- Advancing affordable access and adoption of broadband services in all communities with a focus on underserved communities.

## **Holding Utilities Accountable**

- Continuing to emphasize the need for the electric, communications, and water utilities to operate prudently and provide the mandated safe and reliable level of service that has been funded by customers.

## **Advancing Equitable Environmental Policies**

- Working to make sure underserved communities are getting their fair share of electrification projects.





*The Public*  
**ADVOCATES**  
**OFFICE**

*The Voice of Consumers*  
*Making a Difference*

**CONTACT INFORMATION**

**Amy Yip-Kikugawa**

Acting Director

[amy.yip-kikugawa@cpuc.ca.gov](mailto:amy.yip-kikugawa@cpuc.ca.gov)

[publicadvocates.cpuc.ca.gov](http://publicadvocates.cpuc.ca.gov)